DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 719 CG 026 344

AUTHOR Whiddon, Sue
TITLE Graduate School - A Viable Option after Graduation.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Choice; College Admission; *College Choice; Financial Aid Applicants; Graduate School Faculty; *Graduate Study; Higher Education; *Institutional Characteristics; Masters Degrees; *Program Content; *Reputation; Student Financial Aid

ABSTRACT

For many undergraduate students graduate school may seem a remote, futuristic possibility at best. Yet, reality may dictate that an advanced degree will be necessary to attain one's career goals. Undergraduate education is not designed to be an end-all to the learning process, but rather an introduction to the experiences and ever-changing knowledge in our field. On-the-job learning experiences coupled with continued study enhance the professional's skills and facilitate greater contribution to the profession. This paper examines pertinent issues involved in making the decision to continue one's education beyond the baccalaureate degree and the timing for matriculation. Questions designed to clarify the decision making process, such as "Do my career goals require further education?," or "Do I have to qualify for financial support to continue my education at this time?," are provided. Program selection is the major focus of the paper. The following topics are covered: (1) Institutional Size; (2) Institutional Location; (3) Institutional Reputation; (3) Program Offerings; (4) Criteria for Admission; (5) Financial Aid; and (6) Procedures for Application. Each topic discussed basic procedures as well as pros and cons where applicable. (JBJ)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 387 719

Graduate School - A Viable Option After Graduation

. Sue Whiddon, Ed.D.
Professor

Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences
College of Health & Human Performance
305 Florida Gym
University of Florida

CG026344

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
S. Whiddon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or orgnization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Graduate School - A Viable Option After Graduation

For many undergraduate students anxiously awaiting the day they receive their diplomas, graduate school may seem a remote, futuristic possibility at best. Yet, reality may dictate that an advanced degree will be necessary to attain one's career goals. Undergraduate education is not designed to be an end-all to the learning process, but rather an introduction to the experiences and ever-changing knowledge in our field. On-the-job learning experiences coupled with continued study enhance the professional's skills and facilitate greater contribution to the profession.

Making the Decision

Making a decision regarding the continuance of one's education beyond the baccalaureate degree and the timing for matriculation requires advanced thought and planning. Although each individual's situation may differ, some common considerations should be candidly addressed by the prospective graduate student in the decision-making process.

1) Should I continue my education immediately after graduation in lieu of entering the workplace, adjusting to a different lifestyle, and/or having family responsibilities which may be deterrents to a later matriculation date?
2) Do my career goals require further education?
3) Would I enhance my chances of employment by acquiring an advanced degree?

4) Do I have or qualify for financial support to continue my education at this time?

5) Would work experience be more beneficial than full-time graduate study at this time? Could the experience give me a needed break from school, a better perspective for later graduate work, and assist me in selecting an area of specialization?

6) Would initially attending graduate school on a part-time basis be a more feasible alternative enabling me to be employed simultaneously?

Selecting A Program

Once the student decides in favor of attending graduate school, the most suitable institution must be selected. Assuming the student is willing to relocate, institutional size, location, reputation, programmatic offerings, criteria for admission and available financial aid are important factors in the selection.

Size

In general, larger universities tend to be rich in endowments, facilities and distinguished faculty, and they usually provide opportunities for interdisciplinary research with professional schools/colleges on campus. On the other hand, smaller institutions with graduate programs may offer fewer but highly specialized programs with appropriate resources and more individual attention.

Location

Attending graduate school at one's undergraduate institution

provides the benefits of being familiar with one's setting, program, faculty, and no relocation costs. On the other hand, choosing another institution exposes the student to different philosophies, research opportunities, and faculty expertise. Furthermore, the student's residency status at an institution (in- vs. out-of-state) can greatly affect tuition costs and possibly admission consideration. Also of consequence in the selection process are the institutional and community cultural offerings, diversity, recreational pursuits, and general living expenses and style.

Reputation

The quality and reputation (both national and international) of the institution and its faculty can be a factor in programmatic offerings and job placement following graduation. The student's undergraduate advisor and professors in the specialization can provide peer recognition of quality programs. Students may also research articles in professional journals and attend conference presentations which reflect the breadth and quality of the presenters' programs. Program accreditation and recognitions by professional societies including national rankings of graduate institutions by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and the Association of American Universities serve as another gauge of institutional reputation. In the selection process the individual may wish to inquire about the program's job placement success.

Program Offerings

To compare programmatic offerings of various institutions, the student should request a catalog and description of the specific program of study, relevant facilities, faculty research areas, and available practicums/internships. If further information is desired, a visit to the institution or a telephone conversation with an advisor in the specialization can provide further insight into the research opportunities, teacher-student ratio, expected completion time of program, etc. If an on-campus visit is possible, conversations with current graduate students can be rewarding.

Criteria for Admission

Standards for admission serve as a quality control for the institution's educational process and can differ greatly among graduate schools. Even when state boards of regents establish minimal standards, each public university/college may be authorized to adopt more restrictive entry criteria. Admission policies are utilized as predictors of success in graduate school and subsequent careers. Standards should be non-discriminatory and incorporate equitable approaches for dealing with individual differences.

Studies indicate most graduate programs have adopted similar predictive measures although levels of expectation on these may differ. The undergraduate grade point average (GPA) is a common criterion for admission. Most schools consider the last two years of undergraduate work (when the student is taking major

courses) for computation of the GPA. Standardized examination scores such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or Miller Analogy Test (MAT) may be required in addition to or in lieu of meeting the GPA standard. Departments may require scores from all or portions of these examinations to be submitted. Other frequent requirements for consideration by selection committees, include letters of recommendation, a resumé or profile, a letter of intent (to determine compatibility with program emphases and research), interviews, and in some instances, knowledge of a foreign language.

Selection committees may consider making exceptions to one or more of the standards if acceptable extenuating circumstances or other evidence of predicted success are present. Limitations may be placed on the number of students who may be admitted without meeting all criteria for direct admission. Frequently, these students are admitted on a conditional basis to ascertain their ability to pursue graduate work.

Financial Aid

Institutional financial assistance is available in the forms of scholarships/fellowships, assistantships, and loans. Universities provide fellowships and assistantships to attract quality students as well as provide departmental support services in the case of assistantships. Scholarships and fellowships require special qualifications, (i.e., exceptional undergraduate/graduate academic and examination performance, designations such as race or sex, and field of study) and require no service

to the department. Most grants-in-aid are highly competitive whether offered through individual colleges or university-wide. Graduate assistantships offer employment appointments through departments for which stipends and/or tuition waivers are awarded. Criteria for the assistantship selection include clear evidence of superior ability in teaching, research, or services compatible with the department's needs. Students unable to acquire assistantships for their first year of study may be considered for the awards as they progress through the program.

Work or loan programs may be available through departments or the institutional financial affairs office. Loan eligibility may be based upon need, field of study, special designations, and/or previous scholarship. Students desiring such financial assistance are wise to contact the student financial affairs office well in advance of the intended admission date to inquire about their prospects for loans or part-time employment on and off campus.

Procedures for Application

Once the preferred schools have been identified, general application procedures should be followed. Students are encouraged to begin this process one year in advance of the anticipated matriculation date to allow time for examinations to be taken, scores and transcripts to be forwarded, and proper consideration given to admission, and fellowship/assistantship applications. Procedures include:

1) An application for admission form should be requested from

the registrar or from the department's graduate coordinator, completed, and forwarded with fee.

2) Official transcripts from all colleges/universities previously attended should be sent directly to the registrar.

3) Required standardization exam scores should be sent directly to the registrar by the testing service. Allow 6-8 weeks for the institution to receive scores. (Dates and location of the administration of these examinations are obtainable through registrars or the testing service. The examination should be taken early in the senior year. In some instances students must repeat the examination before acceptable scores are attained).

4) Special requirements of the Department (recommendations, letters of intent, resumés, etc.) and applications for assistantships and fellowships should be forwarded. An interview date should be scheduled, if requested.

5) Within reasonable time, if notification of acceptance or rejection or date of decision is not received, a follow-up phone call may be made to the department to inquire if the file is complete and when the decision will be made.

If a student is accepted to more than one graduate school, each should be notified of the student's selection. This courtesy will enable the non-selected institutions to offer entrance and possibly financial aid to another applicant.

Conclusion

Graduate school offers a new challenge to the student with its opportunities for specializing in the field and increasing one's professional potential. Particularly, in times of economic recession, when the job market is tight, graduate school should not be overlook as an option for the immediate future.